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IV. — *The Educated Roman and his Accent*

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FIFTEEN years ago, Professor Frank Frost Abbott, in an article entitled "The Accent in Vulgar and Formal Latin" (*Class. Phil.* II, 444-460), propounded the view that from about the second century before Christ to about the fourth century of the Christian era Latin was spoken with two different word-accents: one, an accent in which stress or energy was the main element, and the other an accent in which the accented syllable had as its chief distinguishing mark a higher pitch or musical note, as in Greek. The uneducated classes, says Professor Abbott, used the accent of energy, and the educated classes used the accent of pitch; the educated classes used the accent of pitch precisely because their schoolmasters were, in the main, Greeks, who used a pitch accent, and because the literary models of the Romans were the works of Greek literature. Now Dr. Sturtevant, in the *T.A.P.A.* XLII, 45-52, has shown that at the time in question, when Latin became split into two accentually different dialects, Greek was still spoken with a pitch accent, not having yet shifted to the accent of energy which characterizes modern Greek; if then it be granted that the educated Roman spoke with a pitch accent, while the uneducated Roman retained the stress accent, this development may fairly be attributed to the Greek.

In accepting Professor Abbott's view, to which I had come (so far as I am aware) independently, I felt that it was unnecessary to repeat his arguments, and therefore limited myself almost exclusively to its metrical applications (*T.A.P.A.* LI, 19-29; cf. *A.J.P.* XLII, 183). But with the appearance of Dr. Sturtevant's recent paper on "The Character of the Latin Accent" (*T.A.P.A.* LII, 5-15), it be-

comes evident that some aspects of the case have been left undiscussed, or at least not satisfactorily interpreted.

In the first place, what is the dividing line between an educated Roman and an uneducated Roman? A twentieth-century American must rid himself of his natural feelings on the point: there was no democracy in education in the second century B.C., nor for many centuries after that. There were few indeed among the Romans who could qualify for the title of 'educated'; quite possibly the term should be limited to statesmen and public orators, and writers of good prose and verse (cf. Mackail, *Latin Literature*, 203). As for women, it can have been only the rare exception who spoke the Latin of the educated man: the comparative seclusion in which, for the most part, women remained at Rome in ancient times, hindered their acquiring the newer refinements of cultivated speech. This is why Cicero felt the speech of his mother-in-law Laelia to be that of Plautus or of Naevius (*de Or.* III, 12, 45); for parallel reasons, in Sanskrit drama, women, even queens, speak Prakrit, while kings and priests speak true Sanskrit; and in the Albanian villages of Greece, some twenty years ago, the women spoke only Albanian, while the men spoke Greek also. Let there be, therefore, no confusion through using 'educated' and 'uneducated' in different quantitative meanings; for in this sense the 'educated,' who spoke Latin with a pitch accent, were very few in number.

In the second place, is it likely that the educated few would have taken on the Greek accent, when the Greeks were looked upon with a certain kind of scorn, as an inferior race? We recall stories of Cato the Censor, and Juvenal's tirade against the *Graeculus esuriens* (III, 60-125, esp. 78); but there is much reason to think that Cato's Graecophobia has been magnified, and Juvenal's exaggerated satire is directed in large part against the Asiatic Oriental rather than against the Greek specifically. On the other hand, the sneer expressed in the term *frog-eater* does not extend to the language

of Racine and of Molière; the denomination *dago* does not lower our esteem for the works of Dante and of Petrarch; the modern Greek bootblacks and fruit-sellers in America do not drag Homer and Sophocles from their preëminent position; no anti-Semitic prejudice can do away with the importance of the Hebrew language and of its greatest monument, the Old Testament. No; a people may be, rightly or wrongly, regarded as an inferior race, but their language may at the same time be an object of admiration, even of reverent awe. Cicero's laudation of literature, of which Greek literature formed the major part, in his oration *pro Archia Poeta*, is a truer index of cultivated Roman feeling toward the Greek language, than Juvenal's bitter satire against them as men. In this connection, we should think of the influence of Greek upon Latin as exercised through Greek literature and Greek schoolmasters, not as exercised by Greek parasites and vaudeville performers.

Then, would an influence of Greek upon Latin, exercised in this way, be likely to take the form of altering the nature of the syllabic accent? Let us see how the Greek schoolmaster was to function: he had to use an acquired language, Latin, as a vehicle for teaching Latin, and he had also to teach his own language, Greek. In learning Latin, he found most of the sounds essentially identical with those of his own language (except *f*; Quint. 1, 4, 14), but he met a stress accent which must have baffled him much as the stress accent of English baffles the Frenchman. He would have the less incentive to acquire the stress accent of Latin, because his Roman students were eager to perfect themselves in his own language, Greek; and the lighter effect upon the ear, made by an accent of pitch, may very well have appealed to the Roman as an improvement on his own naturally vigorous and monotonous stress.

It is difficult for us to recreate, mentally, the psychological conditions in which the Roman found himself. Dr. Sturtevant here goes astray, when he says (p. 10): "We are asked

to believe that this absurd foreign pronunciation of Latin was adopted for use in serious literature! As well suppose that British or American enthusiasts over French literature would say 'zees peen' for 'this pin' or would use 'he' and 'she' in place of 'it!'" Of course no *pronunciation* can be adopted in any *literature*: pronunciation is used only in vocal utterance, and literature is written or printed; but his pertinent error is in thinking that he has adduced a parallel in 'zees peen' and the like.

We must use *accent* in one and the same meaning. When a man speaks with a foreign accent, we mean usually that he makes some of his sounds rather differently from the standard pronunciation, and that the sentence intonation is different. But in the present matter of Latin, we have to do with neither of these phenomena: we have to do merely with the nature of the syllabic accent, not even with its position, certainly not with the sentence intonation, except so far as that is affected by the different nature of the syllabic or word accent. No; this kind of accent has no concern with mispronunciation of sounds, as in 'zees peen.' It is a matter rather analogous to the musical intonation of the best Tuscan Italian and the harsher and more monotonous Italian of many other parts of Italy. It is not unlike the difference between normal American English, and the same words spoken with a British intonation, in which pitch plays a greater part.

Let us try to recreate, by a hypothetical parallel, the conditions which prevailed at Rome when the Greek influence gained its sway. Let us suppose that we speakers of English had very little formal instruction, and especially had none at all concerning our mother-tongue; that we had few written documents, and no works of literature; that we learned our language much as do the barbarians who have no system of writing — that is, by mere imitation of the sounds as heard. Let us further suppose that we came into contact with a highly gifted nation, which we shall call the French, who had a highly

developed language and system of instruction, based on the study of their own incomparable literature; that they became our teachers of language, both for French and for our own speech; that the nurses of the children of the foremost families were in many instances French; and that French had a word-accent lacking the heavy stress of English and characterized by a pleasing musical variation. Would it be astonishing if the children, so trained, should speak English with a French word-accent?¹ At least, this might easily be the case, with those who learned to speak French with the same facility as their native tongue; with those who passed some years in France studying philosophy or oratory; with those who made French works of literature their models in history or in drama or in oratorical composition or in philosophical treatises.

Now change English to Latin, and French to Greek, and we have the situation in Rome in the second century before our era (cf. A. S. Wilkins, *Roman Education*, 18-36).² Naturally the Greek pitch accent was not acquired by all who came into contact with it, nor in the same degree by all who did acquire it: to attempt a discrimination would be to delimit poverty and riches by the possession of one more or one less than a certain number of dollars. Yet we can recognize two general classes, one very large, including the general rabble, the slightly educated, those with whom education did not 'take,' those who were reluctant to accept culture; the second class, a small one, including the best orators, the poets, the statesmen, the cultured classes in general. The latter spoke Latin with a pitch accent, the former spoke Latin with a stress accent.

¹ Americans resident in England commonly acquire the British intonation to a greater or smaller degree, which is a distinctly similar phenomenon and a fair parallel to what we claim for the Latin word-accent.

² At an earlier date, Livius Andronicus (284-202), the first great Greek teacher in Rome, had to make an abridged Latin version of the *Odyssey*, as a textbook for the teaching of Latin; so lacking was Latin as yet in literary documents (Gell. xviii, 21, 42; xviii, 9, 5; Cic. *Brut.* 71; Hor. *Epist.* II, 1, 69).

On this basis we can understand why the literary Latin language suffered virtually no change in syllabic values from about 100 B.C. until after 300 A.D.; for the literary language was not subject to the breaking-down which a stress accent inflicts. On the other hand, there are adequate remains of the colloquial or vulgar language, to show changes of precisely the nature which would be expected from a strong stress accent (cf. Abbott, *op. cit.* 453-454). But Dr. Sturtevant believes that "the *sermo cotidianus* of the upper classes had a stress accent," because Cicero's mother-in-law Laelia spoke like Plautus or Naevius, and because Quintilian, 1, 6, 21, says that some pedants said *calefacere* where he himself and others like him said *calfacere*, with syncope. The former point has already been disposed of. As for the second point, Quintilian was undoubtedly a cultured man, who spoke with the pitch accent if any educated Roman did. But that does not have the least connection with the matter of *calefacere* or *calfacere*. The speech of the cultivated and the speech of the uncultured may differ in any one or more or all of several phenomena: (1) in the use of words, as in *equus* and *caballus*; (2) in the use of simplex and derivative, as in *auris* and *auricula*; (3) in the pronunciation of certain sounds, as in *Claudius* and *Clodius*; (4) in syntax, as in the *quod*-clause instead of the accusative and infinitive in indirect discourse; (5) in the position of the word-accent, as in such English words as *research* and *discourse*; (6) in the nature of the word-accent, which has been the theme of this paper; and in other particulars.

It does not follow that a cultivated user of a language is equally superior in all these points; he may choose his words very carefully, and yet mispronounce them; he may pronounce them impeccably, and yet misuse them; he may in other respects speak perfectly, and yet say *I saw Mary and he yesterday*. There is no sharp dividing line between cultivated speech and uncultivated, even as there is no dividing point between the number of grains of sand which make a

heap and the number of those which do not suffice. Therefore, when Quintilian said *calfacere*, it did not mean that he spoke in an uncultured way, nor that *calfacere* was a cultured word; it meant merely that a word-form which had developed in popular speech had been accepted by cultured speech. If Quintilian's use of *calfacere*, Octavian's recommendation of *caldus* rather than *calidus*, and a few other similar examples (Sturtevant, *op. cit.*, 7) are to be taken as indicating that there was no difference between good colloquial speech and the best cultured speech, then Dr. Sturtevant's employment of *ictus* and *ultima* in his article is evidence of the substantial identity of English and Latin, and his use of *phenomena* and *hypothesis* shows the impossibility of distinguishing between English and Greek. But in truth the distinctions can be made; and we are justified in drawing a line between cultured Latin and uncultured Latin, both on the extant evidence and on the analogy of every language which is both spoken and written. English, French, German, to go no further, show this divergence in marked degree.

We are drawing a distinction between the Latin of the most highly educated classes, or rather class, a small group, as we have said, and the Latin of the general public, of little or no education. It is an absurdity to inquire if "Vergil ordinarily spoke with a stress accent, but discarded it for pitch when he composed hexameters," and whether Cicero used "a stress accent in dictating his letters and philosophical works, . . . but . . . a pitch accent when he addressed the people" (Sturtevant, *op. cit.* 7-8), for any difference in the language of the two great Romans in the two situations would be in the choice of words and in syntax; the Anglophile American will pronounce *baggage* with the same British intonation as in saying *luggage* — the difference is only in the word. The point needs no argument.

It is essential, however, for the thorough grounding of this view of the two accents, to trace the development and application in Latin. When the Umbrian Plautus (254-184 B.C.)

wrote his comedies, he was under the serious handicap of fitting a stress-accented language to a Greek metrical system which employed both quantity and stress; and he made certain departures from the Greek practices, adding thereto certain shortenings before or after the *metrical* accent, known as *breves breviantes*, and by careful selection secured a much closer agreement of prose accent and verse accent than could have been brought about by mere chance (Sturtevant, *Class. Phil.* XIV, 234-244). The same holds true of Terence and presumably of the other writers of that time, in the same field.

Ennius (239-169 B.C.), in the hexameter, had a different task before him, because of the different requirements of this meter and because of the less colloquial nature of the style. The *breves breviantes* do not appear, but other licenses are frequent. One of his chief difficulties was the conflict of word-accent and metrical ictus; apparently, he secured somewhat greater agreement of the two in the first four feet of the verse than Vergil did. At any rate, he was confronted by an insoluble problem: the two accents could not be entirely reconciled.

In the period between Ennius and Cicero (106-43 B.C.), the influence of the Greek language attained its maximum, though no notable decline is then to be observed until generations afterward. The division in the nature of the accent in Latin took place during these years, and it remains only to explain the effects upon Latin verse of the first century B.C. and later. Dr. Sturtevant shows that words of all types are, in the first four feet of the hexameter, used by preference in such a way that coincidence of word-accent and ictus will be less frequent than would be produced by mere chance, while in the last two feet the two accents agree in over ninety-seven per cent of the instances. No conclusions should be drawn from this, however, until certain automatic factors have been given proper consideration. At the end of the line, a word of one syllable is not common, even apart from pos-

sible rhythmical dislike, because such words are chiefly conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns, most of which do not naturally stand just before even the slight break made by the end of the verse. If the line ends with a word of two or three syllables, the last two ictuses of the line necessarily coincide with the word-accent, unless the fifth foot contains a word of two short syllables or of one short syllable, respectively. Words of four syllables with the value $\cup \cup \text{—} \propto$ seem, at the end of the line, to be avoided; words of five syllables do not violate the word-accent, for one ictus coincides with the word-accent and another ictus falls on the initial long syllable. Thus the last two feet of the line have naturally drawn to themselves a high percentage of words which require harmony of accent and ictus, and have rejected those which require clash; and the corollary is, that words requiring harmony, having been appropriated for use in the last two feet, appear less frequently in the first four feet, and words requiring clash, having been rejected from the last two feet, appear in greater percentage in the first four feet. There is a further corollary that a word like *mittunt*, which may be employed either with harmony or with clash, must, in combination with words requiring clash, also normally be used with clash; in fact, it can be used with harmony in itself and clash in the preceding foot, only if it is preceded by a long monosyllable or a pyrrhic, and with harmony in itself and clash in the following foot, only if followed by a word of choriambic value.

By these facts, and by one other, I explain the results which Dr. Sturtevant has secured in his examination of the hexameter. The other fact is the greater regularity observable in all verse-structure in the Indo-European languages, at the end of the verse, and the general tendency to a uniform refrain or chorus at the close of song-units. The Latin hexameter — granted the view propounded by Professor Abbott — shows a regularity in the tune at the end of the line, where with but rare exceptions the musical beat comes on the higher

note, but secures variety by placing the musical beat on many of the lower notes in the earlier part of the line. The other differences which Dr. Sturtevant finds (*op. cit.*, 14) between the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* in the position of the word-ends and in the distribution of the sense-pauses, seem to me to follow from the same factors, with the addition of the syncope of short syllables in early Latin, which greatly increased the percentage of long syllables in the language and made the Latin words much more difficult to use in the Greek meters.

But the demonstration that during several centuries the cultivated speaker of Latin used a pitch accent and the uncultivated continued to use the stress accent of his ancestors, rests upon the evidence presented by Professor Abbott, a view which alone reconciles satisfactorily the conflicting evidence of the language and of the grammarians; all else is merely the explanation and the application of his view.